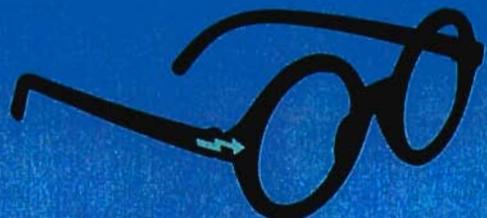


## **Exhibit G**



*If* HARRY  
POTTER

*Ran*

GENERAL  
ELECTRIC

*LEADERSHIP WISDOM FROM  
THE WORLD OF THE WIZARDS*

**TOM MORRIS**

THIS BOOK HAS NOT BEEN PREPARED, APPROVED, OR LICENSED BY ANY PERSON OR ENTITY THAT CREATED,  
PUBLISHED, OR PRODUCED THE HARRY POTTER BOOKS OR RELATED PROPERTIES.

  
“A spectacular book. Tom Morris explains what we all can learn  
from J. K. Rowling’s magnificent work about leadership,  
ethics, success, and happiness.”

—Robert A. Eckert, Chairman and CEO, Mattel, Inc.

“Dumbledore gets it. Now Tom Morris is helping the rest of  
us get it. I wish every college and every school of business could  
teach the virtues that Harry masters at Hogwarts.”

—Jeff Brenzel, Dean of Admissions, Yale University

“*If Harry Potter Ran General Electric* is a tightly woven  
masterpiece loaded with incredible insights about things that truly  
matter in life and at work. A fascinating and wonderful read.”

—Harry Paul (coauthor of *Fish!*) and Ross Reck, authors of *Revved!*

“Tom Morris’s engaging new book reminds us that—for all the  
amazing technological wizardry of the twenty-first-century  
economy—the real magic of leadership comes from  
moral virtue and strength of character.”

—Ivan Seidenberg, Chairman and CEO, Verizon

US \$24.95 /\$32.95 CAN

ISBN 0-385-51754-8



9 780385 517546





*If HARRY POTTER  
Ran GENERAL ELECTRIC*

TOM  
MORRIS

CURRENCY  
DOUBLEDAY



*If HARRY*

**POTTER**

*Ran*

**GENERAL**

**ELECTRIC**

*LEADERSHIP WISDOM*

*FROM THE WORLD OF THE WIZARDS*

**TOM MORRIS**



NEW YORK LONDON TORONTO SYDNEY AUCKLAND

# CONTENTS

## *Acknowledgments* xi

INTRODUCTION	xiii
What the Harry Potter Stories Offer Us	xvii
Magic, Virtue, and Meaning	xviii
<b>1 ALBUS DUMBLEDORE, CEO</b>	<b>1</b>
Leader, Teacher, Philosopher	3
Aristotelian Greatness	6
The Virtues of Good Humor and Great Feeling	14
Emotional Self-Control	18
Dumbledore's Philosophy of Proper Living	21
The Lessons of the Headmaster	24
<b>2 THE COURAGEOUS HARRY POTTER</b>	<b>25</b>
The Virtues at Hogwarts	26
Feelings of Fear	28
Harry's Recipe for Courage	30
The Power of Preparation	35
Support and Confidence	38

The Power of the Mind	44
Values and Courage	49
The Action Approach to Attitude and Virtue	52
Harry Potter, Jeff Immelt, and the Rest of Us	56

<b>3 THE ETHICS OF WIZARDS</b>	<b>61</b>
Our Challenge	61
Getting Clear About Words	62
Understanding the Heart of Ethics	64
How to Be Ethical Every Day	67
Moral Relativism and Realism	72
Ethical and Unethical People	77
The Dangers of Corruption	80
The Philosophy of the Unethical Mind	82
Reciprocity and Restraint	85
Respect for Rules	91
The Golden Rule	98
Harry's Moral Journey	102
The Six Tests of Ethical Action	103

<b>6 THE WISDOM OF THE WIZARDS</b>	<b>187</b>
Logic and Luck	191
Delight and Disaster	198
Appearance and Reality	202
Companions and Good Friends	213
Getting Worse and Getting Better	220
Love and Life	223

<b>7 HAPPINESS AND MEANING</b>	<b>227</b>
Money, Power, Fame, and Status	227
The Mirror of Eris	232
The Meaning of Life	241
<i>Index</i>	249

<b>4 TRUTH AND LIES AT HOGWARTS</b>	<b>107</b>
A World of Lies	108
The Question of Moral Justification	111
Lies of All Kinds	120
A Lie and a Friendship	139
Lies and Moral Reflection	142
A Final Word on Deception	145

<b>5 LEADERSHIP ALCHEMY</b>	<b>151</b>
The Role of a Leader	152
Motivating Others	162
Strengths and Weaknesses	171
Passing the Torch	181

have prepared the way for his courageous deeds. And the same thing can be true in our lives. This first lesson in the end is simple. If you want to be brave, be prepared.

## SUPPORT AND CONFIDENCE

*2. Surround yourself with support.* The best preparation can position us and ready us for almost any task at the level of personal skill, but by itself that's sometimes not enough to bring us a feeling of confidence and the reality of courage. It's always hard to go it alone, especially in circumstances of great uncertainty or threat. If we have friends and companions who believe in us, and who express that belief to us, they can encourage and support us when we need it like nothing else can. Of course, crowd psychology and interpersonal dynamics can be a two-edged sword. Other people can help us or drag us down. But the firm support of strong companions and close collaborators can strengthen us in the courage we need when things are particularly difficult.

Sometimes, just being around confident people can raise our own general level of confidence. Attitudes can be very contagious. At one point, Ron's sister Ginny reflects on what it was like to grow up around two of her other brothers:

“The thing about growing up with Fred and George . . . is that you sort of start thinking anything’s possible if you’ve got enough nerve.” (OP 655)

We tend to become like the people we’re around. If we hang around with negative doom-and-gloom types, depressed pessimists, cynical slackers, and worrywarts, it’s hard to enjoy positive feelings in our own hearts. Their bad influence will have an effect. If instead we associate with positive, confident, and courageous people, we will tend to become more positive, confident, and courageous ourselves.

**Our friends are a forecast of our future.**

There is an old saying that we’ve all heard: “It’s lonely at the top.” Many top leaders feel isolated. And this has psychological consequences. We all need some sort of support group of friends or colleagues. That’s one of the most important reasons why groups like the Young Presidents’ Organization and the Young Entrepreneurs’ Organization have come into existence. YPO, for example, is an international support and educational organization with chapters in major cities throughout the world that brings together individuals who have risen to the job of president of a substantially large company before the age of forty. Members can belong until the age of fifty, at which stage they may then go on to join the World Presidents’ Organization or another group called, simply, CEO. Having done scores of talks, workshops, and retreats for YPO and WPO groups over the years, I have become convinced that these organizations serve many important purposes in the lives of their members and within the broader global society. Members learn from each other, from world-class resources of all sorts, and can share their loves, joys, worries, and fears, their deepest ambitions and their most daunting challenges with accomplished peers in a completely confidential setting. But another thing also happens. The members of these groups generally tend to be very positive and confident people who rub off on each other, “as iron sharpens iron.” Just being around his YPO friends can lift a member’s spirits during a difficult time at work or in his personal life. The collective confidence and positive spirit to be found throughout these groups can work wonders in the life of any member and bolster those same characteristics in his own heart and mind. We all need to be around people whose positive attitudes will help spark and sustain our own.

This is one sort of support that good people can provide us just by being who they are and conveying the right attitudes to us in what we see them do. But there are other, more active levels of assistance our friends and colleagues can provide us as well. They can verbally encourage us, pump us up, and cheer us on, and they can provide us with many other kinds of substantial help when we need it. Any of

these forms of support will tend to boost our self-confidence in whatever challenge we face.

The best way to get the support of cheerleaders and helpers into our lives is to take the initiative and serve in that role for them. People tend to reflect back what we do for them. If we want other people to support us, we need to cultivate the right sort of relationship with them from the start and be very supportive of their needs and aims. We should encourage and help the people around us first because it's just the right thing to do. It's simply the appropriate way to behave toward our friends and associates. But a great side benefit of helping others is that, as a result, they will then be much more likely to help us when we need it as well.

Harry supports his friends when they need him. Then, when he needs help or encouragement, they are also there for him. Let me give a simple example of how he often benefits from this support. Before his first Quidditch match, our young wizard had a very bad case of nerves. We are told, simply, that he felt terrible. As he walked out of the locker room to go onto the field, he found himself "hoping his knees weren't going to give way" (SS 185). It was that bad. But then he saw something his friends had done to encourage him, and it had an immediate effect. They had made a huge banner that now flew over the crowd flashing the words "Potter for President." He instantly felt better and more courageous.

At a later Quidditch match, the Gryffindor house team captain, Oliver Wood, gives his teammates a locker room pep talk engaging their emotions and reminding them of their high level of preparation and competence (CS 167). This well-informed cheerleading then has its intended effect. They go out and win the match.

This is just basic human psychology. We all benefit from the support and encouragement of others. If we take an active role in helping and encouraging the good people around us when we see they need it, we will be preparing them to do the same for us when we are in need. Harry's friends mean a lot to him. He is touched by their problems.

He helps them. He encourages them. And they in turn encourage him. They also assist him in many other ways.

It's easier to be courageous and confident when we know we have the backup support and goodwill of others. In fact, one of the most important themes of the Harry Potter stories is the great value of friendship. Everything Harry is able to accomplish is rooted in the collaborative efforts of many people. His best friends help him. Some of the teachers help him. The groundskeeper Hagrid helps him. And the great Dumbledore often brings him crucial aid as well. Even when Harry feels most alone, he is able to accomplish whatever he needs to do because of the support of someone else.

---

### **Relationships are the foundation for all lasting success.**

---

The motivational literature of the past half century has been geared mainly to individual goal setting and goal attainment. It is rightly described as "self-help" literature, because the focus is distinctly on the individual self and its improvement. But the greatest thinkers on human potential have always realized that there is more to true success than just the development of the individual and the solo achievement of personal goals. There is a social, interpersonal, communitarian side of success that we should never neglect. There is no self-made man or woman whose growth, development, and success didn't come as the result of the input and help of other people along the way. That's just how life works. As Aristotle realized, we are all essentially social creatures. We need other people. And they need us. We accomplish the most, and experience the deepest sense of fulfillment in what we achieve, when we have a close network of people supporting and helping us, people whom we in turn assist when they need our help.

Just having other people helping out inspires us with more confidence and courage when we need it. But it's especially nice when those other people verbally affirm their belief in us—and in doing so help us

to believe even more deeply in ourselves. Before the second of three very dangerous challenges that Harry must confront in his fourth year, his huge, strong friend Hagrid goes to the trouble of pulling him aside at class time, patting him on the back, and repeatedly telling him that he's going to do fine in the contest, and actually win—he's certain of it (GF 485). Just witnessing the gentle giant work so hard to encourage his young friend can bring us all an inner smile of satisfaction at the benefits of real friendship between people, however different they may appear on the surface. But from the way the passage ends, we can tell that Harry isn't able to share his friend's confidence in his prospects.

The best intentions and wishes of others, along with their most heartfelt cheerleading, sometimes just don't fully convince us that we're up to the task of whatever challenge we are facing. When we're worried enough, we can inwardly discount the very best words of encouragement that our friends speak. We can tell ourselves they're just being nice, or that they have no idea how bad the situation really is, or how totally ill-equipped we are to deal with it. On occasion, we can work ourselves into such a lather as to be just beyond the reach of anyone's best attempts to be helpful and encouraging. This happened to Harry on the morning of his second Triwizard Tournament task.

Hagrid's words of encouragement ultimately couldn't help him. And neither could the cheerful assurances of his fellow students all morning as they greeted him and expressed their belief and confidence in him. It all left him cold. He had gotten himself into such a state that nothing that anyone else said could help (GF 488).

Another interesting example of this occurs with Ron, after he has joined the Gryffindor Quidditch team and has made enough mistakes in his play to convince him in his own heart that he is really no good at all. And the more convinced of this that he becomes, the more his play deteriorates. Any error, however small, can take the wind out of his sails and get him completely off his game. We are told that:

His greatest weakness was a tendency to lose confidence when he made a blunder . . . (OP 400)

We've all seen this happen. Perhaps we've experienced it ourselves. Each little mistake we make renders us more self-conscious, more fearful of another mistake, and somehow more expectant of exactly that result, in a downward spiral of self-doubt that can create exactly what it dreads. By dwelling mentally on his mistakes, Ron gets so down in the dumps that it's hard for anyone else to help him. Before an upcoming match, Ron and Harry walk together into the Great Hall for breakfast. Everyone there is dressed in the house colors, ready for the big game, and they all give Ron and Harry a huge, enthusiastic welcome, with cheers for their sporting heroes. But it does Ron no good. He sits down in a complete funk.

"I must have been mental to do this," he said in a croaky whisper.  
"Mental."

Harry responds to him and tells him he's going to be fine. He points out that it's absolutely normal to be nervous before a big game. Ron hardly registers what Harry has said.

"I'm rubbish," croaked Ron. "I'm lousy. I can't play to save my life.  
What was I thinking?" (OP 402)

Hermione walks over with Ron's younger sister, Ginny, and they sit down with the boys. Hermione asks how Ron is feeling. Before he can respond, Harry tells her that Ron's just nervous. She chirps up immediately that this is a good thing, and that she's convinced people never perform as well in school exams—her area of particular expertise—unless they feel at least a bit nervous beforehand. But nothing that Hermione or anyone says can seem to help poor Ron in the least. He is impervious to encouragement.

Hermione, however, has made an important point. Nervousness is a form of energy. It's up to us what we do with it. We can let it shut us down, or we can surf on it to success. The best people often feel quite nervous just prior to a performance or challenge. Those who rarely

experience this electric emotion tend for the most part to be clueless slackers who really just don't care, and who therefore never accomplish very much. Nervousness is a sign of emotional commitment and existential, personal investment—a reflection of our values—and it can even be an indication of inner readiness.

---

**Our fear of failure can be a secret springboard to excellence. Used properly it is a fuel for our performance.**

---

Whenever I'm about ready to step in front of a business audience and give a talk, whether it's to a few dozen people or several thousand, I can feel my heart rate increase. I used to say to myself that I'm getting nervous and should just calm down. Now I literally smile, take a deep breath, and just say to myself, "I'm ready." What we often interpret as nervousness can serve us as a very positive thing if we govern it well and use it properly. Hermione is being a good friend to remind Ron of this, using the example closest to her own heart and experience. On this particular occasion, all of Ron's friends do their best to encourage him. But none of the well-intentioned cheerleading and expressions of support can work for poor Ron, who goes on to have a horrible game filled with mistakes, a match that was saved in the end only by his teammate Harry's brilliant individual play.

We often need something more than the encouraging support and verbal assurance of people around us. It's not enough for others to express their belief in us. We need to do something to convince ourselves that we are indeed up to the task. And we each have within our abilities the capacity to do exactly this. There is a mental power used by the most successful of people that is available to us all. It's one that Harry knows how to use when he really needs it.

## THE POWER OF THE MIND

of his persistently negative self-talk. He would have been much better off by trying to be a little more positive. He could have mentally identified something he was good at within the confines of the game, congratulated himself on that, and then sought to understand how he could extend that ability or skill to more aspects of the game. He could have reassured himself that his hard work would indeed eventually pay off. In even the most challenging of situations, most of us can find some leverage point for beginning to change things for the better. But that requires a positive approach. Purely negative thoughts most often result in nothing more than sadly negative results. Positive thoughts can turn us around.

Inner attitude is the doorway to outer performance. Motivational speakers have harped on this for so long largely because it's true, despite the unfortunate common tendency of too many to stretch this truth into the hyperbolic stratosphere. In reaction to the unqualified and irresponsible claims that are sometimes made for the power of positive self-talk, some intelligent people have become very skeptical of this simple strategy for building confidence. I've heard well-educated businesspeople say, "I'm a little too smart for all that baloney." But reading Aristotle and other great thinkers carefully has convinced me that the smartest people often need the benefit of a little inner cheer-leading the most, since they are precisely the people most likely to understand all the ways in which things could possibly go wrong. They need to redirect their energies and mental focus into a more positive direction. We could all use this easily available form of psychological self-medication now and then. Self-talk isn't literally magical, but it can often come close.

Sometimes, Harry tries to build other people's confidence by what he says, and at other times, he talks to his friends in a way that is actually aimed at building up his own inner courage as well. Having to leave Ron in a difficult situation and walk into a worse one, with fairly compelling evidence that he might not get out alive, Harry tells Ron that he'll see him a little later, actually conveying a positive message to himself as well as to his friend (CS 304). By articulating aloud

3. *Engage in positive self-talk.* Ron undermined and weakened his ability to play Quidditch at the level of the talent he did have because



## THE ETHICS OF WIZARDS

Always with Unyielding Integrity.

—GE *Values Statement*

Mark Twain once remarked that to act morally is noble, but to talk about acting morally is also noble, and a lot less trouble. This is funny, but while it's true in one sense, it's also misleading on a much deeper level. In this chapter, we're going to talk about what we can learn from the wizards in Harry Potter's world about the moral life and the role of ethics in long-term success. But on the topic of ethics, the whole point of talk is action. When we begin to understand what acting morally, or ethically, really means, we learn very quickly that the worst trouble in life comes from ignoring the insights and requirements of ethics.

### OUR CHALLENGE

Ethics is one of the most important things in business, and in life generally, and it's also one of the most misunderstood. Getting it right—properly understanding the ethical way of living, and then acting with ethical consistency every day—is the foundation of sustainable success in both our professional and personal lives. Getting it wrong is a setup for disaster, as so many business headlines over the past few years have indicated.

There is nothing more crucial for building a great career, enjoying a rich and fulfilling personal life, and leaving your proper legacy in this world than living the right ethical values in everything you do. But consistently ethical living has always been a challenge for a great many people. Before we take a direct look at some of the ethical lessons in Harry Potter's world, we're going to do a little preliminary thinking about why ethical living is such a challenge, we're going to dig up the deepest truth concerning what ethics is really all about, and then we're going to ask what it takes to live the best life we can.

Hogwarts is ethically no different from the rest of the world. There have been saints and scoundrels at every point in history. The saints have understood some important things that the scoundrels have never fully grasped. If we can share their insights, we will inevitably gain a new and distinctive motivation to resist the temptations that always threaten to lure us off the high road of ethical action.

### GETTING CLEAR ABOUT WORDS

When you think about it, the word "ethics" itself can be a bit confusing. Is it singular or plural? It looks plural, but, oddly, it's both. We might say, "His ethics are deplorable," treating it as plural, but we could just as easily remark, "Ethics is crucial in business," using a singular verb as if we're dealing with a singular noun. To make things even more complicated, we sometimes use another form of the word that's obviously singular—"The Puritan ethic is fading fast." This can all be a tad worrisome for any of us who are haunted by the memory of an old English teacher, every bit as strict as Minerva McGonagall, who insisted that we get such things right. But the key to a basic mastery of the word is actually quite simple.

When we're talking about the various principles or patterns of action that a person lives by, we tend to speak of ethics in the plural—as in "Her ethics are admirable." When we want to refer to an overall concern for moral principles, or to the study of such principles

and values generally, we most often use the term in a singular way—as in "Ethics always has a place in law school, medical school, and business school curricula." Could we alternatively say that ethics always *have* (plural) a place in professional school curricula? Yes, unfortunately, the sad fact is that we can, although it would be a bit less standard. There is no absolute consistency of usage for the term in ordinary language, but there are general tendencies of standard use.

One more source of potential confusion is that some people use the words "ethics" and "morality" differently, limiting the former to professional and business contexts and the latter to personal matters. It seems to me that this is ultimately a distinction without a difference, or else it's a big mistake. We shouldn't even try to compartmentalize our lives in this way, in terms of how we treat people. Other human beings deserve a certain measure of respect, honor, and care, whether the context is business or family life, the office or the neighborhood. Values like truth and virtues like courage range across the distinction between the personal and professional with no alteration whatsoever. Because of this, I like to use the words "ethics" and "morality" basically as synonyms, meaning roughly the same thing.

---

**Respect, honor, and a concern for others are just as important at work as they are at home.**

---

We shouldn't let language confuse us. Life is often confusing enough without allowing our words to wrap us up in needless perplexity. The predominant modern misunderstanding of ethics, however, has little to do with grammar and word usage. It's a fundamental mistake concerning what ethics is really all about. It's subtle, and it's dangerous. Seeing the real truth about ethics will help us to unmask this mistake, and once we do, we'll understand the real nature and power of ethical living. That, in turn, will help us to learn the most we can from the ethics of the wizards in Harry's world.

## UNDERSTANDING THE HEART OF ETHICS

Most people nowadays seem to think that ethics is all about staying out of trouble. That's why corporate and industry discussions of ethics always center on issues of law, regulation, codes of conduct, compliance, and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines. But this is a misunderstanding of ethics that has misled people throughout much of human history, and it's a mistake that can set us up for serious problems today. When you think that ethics is all about staying out of trouble, you can easily be tempted to accept any alternative way of avoiding trouble as a substitute for real ethics. We all saw this in the case of the Enron debacle. Some very smart executives came to believe that sophisticated deceptions involving sufficiently complex and "creative" accounting practices would keep them out of trouble, no matter what they did. But they were wrong. And disaster ensued.

The ancient philosophers saw it all much more clearly, and so have the best people in all of human history: Ethics is not about staying out of trouble. Ethics is about creating strength. And this operates at every level. Ethics is all about strong people, strong relationships, strong organizations, strong friendships, strong communities, and strong families. Ethical action produces a form of strength grounded in trust that nothing else can duplicate. And that's because ethics is rooted in a fundamental realism about human nature. There can be no substitute for it when it's properly understood.

---

### The path to resilience and strength is through ethical behavior. Unethical conduct inevitably leads to failure.

---

My father had his own real estate company, focused on large residential land development. He always treated people well. He was completely honest in all his business dealings, absolutely dependable, and he went out of his way to be helpful to his clients, along with potential clients. Because of that, people instinctively trusted him. His reputation for integrity spread. And his business grew. I remem-

ber that, in the course of his career, he sold the same piece of land—two hundred and fifty acres—six times. When each buyer or group of buyers decided that they wanted to sell, they came back to my father to handle the transaction. They all did well because of their investments, and my dad did very well because of his character. Strong character is a foundation for strong business.

Harry Potter's friends look to him as a leader not just because of his many talents and accomplishments but also because of his character. They know they can trust him. They can depend on him. They are convinced that he has their best interests at heart, as well as his own. He will do anything for them, and they know it. This deep-down certainty about Harry's goodness provides a strength and resilience to his friendships. He and his friends occasionally may misunderstand each other and have fights like many young friends do, but in the end, their bond is so strong that his closest chums will follow Harry to what they know may be their deaths. Harry's fundamentally ethical orientation is the foundation of much of the good that he can do with others.

There is something else that's important for us to get straight. Morality and legality are different. Ethics and law overlap, but they are distinct things. Some people think that as long as they aren't violating any laws, they are satisfying all the requirements of ethics. One way to see the difference between ethics and the law is to consider the fact that, throughout history, ethical people have often felt they were morally obligated to disobey grossly unjust laws while working to see them changed. Harry and his fellow students, as well as some of the teachers, including Dumbledore himself, have on occasion had to resist and actually violate official Ministry of Magic decrees that were unjust and dangerous. It was precisely their strong ethical concerns that generated their stance and their resulting actions.

On the other side, sometimes the law is silent but the demands of ethics are clear. Vance Young, a good friend and star Realtor in my small town, had over eighty-three million dollars' worth of real estate closings last year. He always goes far beyond the requirements of the law in making sure that everyone in a transaction is treated fairly and

well. When two friends of his were recently making competing offers on the same piece of property, among four interested buyers, he was careful to follow the ethical path of maximum disclosure to everyone involved in the whole situation, rather than be content merely with the extent of disclosure legally required. He believes that good character demands following the promptings of conscience and not just hiding behind mere compliance. And the strength of his business reflects that commitment.

In ancient Greek, the word “ethos,” from which we get “ethics,” actually meant “character,” not “rules” or “regulations.” It had to do with integrity. And that’s an interesting concept. Our term “integrity” comes from the same root word as “integer,” which means “whole number,” and the word “integrate,” which means “to bring together into a greater unity or wholeness.” Integrity is all about wholeness, unity, and harmony. When you make a decision, do you bring to bear on it all of your highest values? Do you always act in harmony with all your most fundamental beliefs and commitments? Are your words united with the truth? Do you treat other people the way you would want to be treated—acting toward others in harmony with how you’d want them to act toward you? These are all questions of integrity. They indicate what makes for strong character, a strong person, and strong relationships. Understanding this helps us to avoid a second and closely related modern misunderstanding of ethics, the very common belief that ethics is really just a matter of restraint and restriction, involving lots of rules that tell us not to do what we might really enjoy and benefit from doing.

We get the English word “virtue” from an ancient Latin word, “*virtu*,” a term that meant “strength, power, or prowess.” The great moral philosophers have always understood that deeply satisfying and proper success in life comes from the exercise of certain virtues, or strengths, of character. As much as the circumstances and conditions of human life have been transformed throughout the centuries, human nature has never really changed, and this insight about success has never changed, either.

Personal power comes from being honest with yourself and candid with other people, along with being dependable, courageous, caring, persistent, and creative. These qualities are all individual human virtues, or habits of thinking, feeling, and acting that empower us. When you understand this, you no longer see ethics as mainly about restriction and restraint, although both these things are certainly part of the ethical stance. As a matter of fact, the simple restraint of self-discipline is one of the most forgotten virtues in modern life, and yet it’s of crucial importance for both business success and personal happiness. The unrestrained life is, ironically, the unsatisfied life. But ethics is not just a matter of being told that “Thou shalt not” do this, or do that. It’s mostly about building and being the best and strongest person that you can be.

#### HOW TO BE ETHICAL EVERY DAY

This last insight leads us to a third aspect of the modern misunderstanding of ethics. Many people tend to think of ethics as encompassing just big, complex, and debatable problems involving professional codes of conduct, large-scale social issues regarding such things as race, gender, and poverty, workplace problems like sexual harassment, and headline-grabbing corporate abuses of standard accounting practices. But ethics is mostly about the little things: How do you feel and act toward the people around you every day? Are you a blessing or a curse to those who cross your path? Do others see you as short-tempered, peevish, insulting, dismissive, or arrogant? Or do they rightly think of you as a kind and caring person? Are you perceived as self-absorbed and undependable, or as someone others can count on? These are the basic ingredients of ethical living. Of course, as Harry’s career at Hogwarts often shows, circumstances can sometimes mislead people into misunderstanding us and ascribing to us characteristics, attitudes, and motivations that we don’t have at all. But a truly ethical person will be understood as such by the people closest to him or her. And Harry’s experience bears this out. When all the rest of the

school seems to doubt him, he always has at least one friend who sees him for the basically good person he really is.

The little things always add up. How do we interact with those around us? What tone of voice do we use? Are we kind and understanding? Are we honest? Do we get back to people with answers to their questions as quickly as possible, or do we ignore their needs whenever we think we can get away with it? Do we realize that great business is all about taking care of the customer, or do we think that it's really all about us—our needs and our income? Are we as good as our word, or do we expect a free pass in life? These are the most common sorts of questions that constitute the small but very important concerns of everyday ethics.

### In ethical behavior, everything matters.

Ethics is not mainly about mind-bending complexities and dilemmas at all. Sometimes, of course, we do face difficult questions where ethical demands might seem to pull us in two opposite directions. This can happen when loyalties to more than one person, institution, or value are in play—as, for example, when you're both representing the interests of your company and yet also acting as an advocate for your client. We can also occasionally face other complex issues where there are no clear precedents or rules to guide us. I don't mean to say that figuring out everything we should do in specific situations is always easy. Not at all—it's sometimes quite difficult. But it always involves treating other people as well as we possibly can. It always means treating others the way we would want to be treated if we were in their place. We'll see in just a bit how this comes up in Harry's life. But for the moment, I want to provide first a little more preparation for our reading of the wizards.

I've just stated a version of the most famous ethical rule in all of world history, the Golden Rule. It's a touchstone of conduct that's been recognized by the wisest people in every developed culture, and it is every bit as relevant to modern business and life as the latest

developments in science and technology. In fact, nothing may be more relevant to personal success than this one standard of action. The best classroom teachers I know govern their conduct by the Golden Rule. And then there are teachers like Severus Snape, Harry's sarcastic, vindictive, and emotionally abusive potions instructor, who seems completely unable to engage in Golden Rule behavior, at least when it comes to Harry and his friends. And this prevents him from teaching them well. The most successful retailers I know treat all their customers in accordance with the Golden Rule—even the difficult ones. Great managers and the most admirable leaders I've ever met follow its directive in everything they do. I've also seen the rich results of this wonderful rule of ethical behavior in the history of my own family's business throughout the years.

The Golden Rule gives us a test. Whenever we're thinking about doing something that will affect another person, or group of people, in any way, we should always ask the question: "Am I treating everyone involved as I would want to be treated?" Other people respond to Golden Rule treatment and will find it difficult not to return the favor and treat us well in turn. I've come to think of this one rule as the single most important tool we have for ethical living. If you haven't been acting in accordance with the Golden Rule in a certain context or relationship in the past, it's never too late to start. When you take the initiative and begin to go down this moral high road, you can change things for the better to an extent that you may never have anticipated. Of course, consulting the Golden Rule can't guarantee that we'll make the right decision in every situation. Some circumstances are indeed complicated, confusing, and tangled up with conflicting considerations. However, using this famous rule can slow us down, refocus our minds, remind us of the likely consequences of our conduct, and nudge us in the right direction. We all need its help in living the ethical life.

---

**Great leaders treat others the way they would want to be treated.**

Sometimes you might find it difficult to do the right thing under pressure. Basically good people can be tempted to break the ethical rules now and then in the same way they might drive five or ten miles an hour over the speed limit out on the interstate. But the ethical limits described by principles like the Golden Rule aren't like highway laws. They are rooted in universals of human nature. We all know that, as important in many ways as our speed limits are, they could have been set a little higher or a little lower. It's possible to violate them on occasion without any obvious harm and for what you feel is a greater good. The problem is that this can contribute to a relaxed, loose attitude toward all limits. But as Socrates taught us long ago, when we cross the moral line and do something unethical, it always causes harm, at least to us, in our own souls. When Draco Malfoy becomes increasingly involved with evil during his sixth year at school, he gradually begins to look physically ill. And Voldemort himself suffered great harm as a result of his attempt to murder Harry. Evil wreaks havoc in the world and always rebounds on itself. There is no proper room in life for lying to clients or family members, betraying people, cheating, stealing, and putting others down. Such actions dishonor and harm the other people involved. And they degrade and weaken those who are responsible for them. It's of vital importance not to stray from the ethical path in anything we do. Unethical behavior always involves self-inflicted damage.

In our own day, more business leaders, and more people generally, are starting to realize a truth long known by the great thinkers. Unethical success is extremely fragile and is always self-destructive over the long run. As Dumbledore says at one point to Harry concerning their chief evil nemesis, recounting what happened when the Dark Lord murdered Harry's parents and chose to target Harry himself, and referring to Harry's resultant commitment to see him eliminated:

“Voldemort himself created his own worst enemy, just as tyrants everywhere do! Have you any idea how much tyrants fear the people they oppress? All of them realize that, one day, amongst their

many victims, there is sure to be one who rises up against them and strikes back!” (HB 51)

If you habitually treat people badly, someday someone will right the imbalance of justice in the universe. And you will feel the consequences. Unethical conduct always bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction. In our daily behavior, and whenever we are called upon to make an ethical decision, we should bear this in mind.

In every situation, it's important to do the right thing. But what about the very toughest decisions, when the right choice isn't easy to see? The late British philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch pointed out in her little book *The Sovereignty of Good* that if we think ethically and act well in the normal course of business and life, if we pay attention to the proper things and value the right things, then, when a difficult decision-making situation arises, we may find to our surprise that the choice has already been made for us by those structures of value and care that we've long been developing. Life is habit, and the right ethical habits will serve us well. If we take care in the little things, the big things won't be so hard to get right after all.

It helps to have friends and mentors with whom we can honestly discuss our trials and struggles. They can give us moral encouragement, and we can return the favor. It's much easier to live ethically when we work with other people who share our basic commitments. But ultimately it's up to each of us to remind ourselves what ethics is all about, and how the strength it creates can't be had any other way.

We have to learn how to resist and ignore the occasional protests and promises of our imagination that there are shortcuts to happiness, and quick fixes of satisfaction, to be had outside the realm of ethical action. In the final analysis, as Socrates, Plato, and all the great philosophers have reminded us, we each need to ask ourselves what sort of life is best worth living and whether our actions each day inspire in favor of that sort of life or undermine it. The real truth about ethics is that, ultimately, everything we do matters, and that the ethical path is the only reliable road to a life of fulfillment and meaning.

It's that important in life, and we see its importance in the various turns and twists of Harry Potter's adventures.

Some people would object strenuously to reading J. K. Rowling's entertaining stories for their ethical lessons. We'll see what their objections are, and then we'll see what the real truth about Harry and his moral journey might be. There are deep truths that can surprise us, and they certainly can enlighten us.

### MORAL RELATIVISM AND REALISM

Some adult readers have claimed that the ethics of the Harry Potter stories are simply deplorable. These books have been accused of "moral relativism" and much worse. They have even been charged with promoting the attitudes and rituals of satanic witchcraft. This latter allegation is silly. The former is just wrong. Let's look briefly at each.

Most of the witchcraft and wizardry of Harry Potter's world has more similarity with the flying brooms and pointed hats to be found in Disney cartoons than with anything in Wicca, the very small, real-world, quasireligious sect of self-proclaimed contemporary witches and warlocks, with their informal priesthood of perpetual graduate students and coffeehouse radicals. And even Wicca itself has more in common with the New Age, Southern Californian, laid-back spirituality of incense and massage oils than with anything involving evil, nefarious actions, and demonic or satanic rituals. Those critics who can't tell the difference just aren't paying attention. Harry and his friends would probably feel right at home at the Magic Kingdom in Orlando or Anaheim, but would get as far away as possible from the dirty dungeons of a modern satanic cult, as fast as their flying broomsticks could carry them. There is no ritual mutilation of animals or perversely religious sacrifice of innocent humans going on at Hogwarts. It isn't that kind of place at all. And there is nothing whatsoever in the stories to encourage anything like that in anyone's life.

As to the charge of moral relativism, critics have often complained that Rowling doesn't do enough in her books to portray a clear and

absolute difference between good and evil. They claim that the good characters are not pure good and the evil villains aren't evil enough. Ask them for examples of what they mean and you'll often get answers as weak as "Well, Dumbledore is supposed to be such a good person and yet he is portrayed on occasion as getting very angry," or "After all, Dumbledore at one point knowingly encourages Harry to sneak around in an invisibility cloak and do something to undermine the adult authorities," or "Harry is supposed to be a good guy and he tells lots of lies. He even swears."

First of all, we can draw a clear and absolute distinction between good and evil without thinking that either is ever found in a pure form in normal life. Rowling's good characters have weaknesses, and her evil characters typically have at least some slim hope of potentially redeeming qualities, however deep down and presently diminished those qualities might be. No realistic depiction of good and evil in the world involves the caricature of deifying the good and absolutely vilifying and demonizing the bad. Rowling's portrayal of good and bad as intermingled in many characters' lives is not moral relativism but the most believable, straightforward moral realism.

Second, Rowling's presentation of her good characters isn't as tainted as critics complain. Consider the complaint that the good headmaster Dumbledore is occasionally described as angry. In our world, as well as in Harry's, good people can get angry, even very angry, and indeed should, when confronted with tremendous injustice or evil. There is nothing inherently bad or wrong about an experience of anger—the moral issue resides in the question of how we control and use that anger. Dumbledore experiences a righteous and robust anger when confronted with gross injustice or evil that endangers others, but he never lets that emotion take control of him and deflect him from the path that goodness demands. Anger is a natural reaction of good to evil. And in the headmaster's life, it acts as the fuel for proper action. When Dumbledore encourages Harry to put on an invisibility cloak and sneak around Hogwarts to do something that undermines an adult authority, the "authority" in question is altogether corrupt and is about

to do something that is both terribly evil and irreversible and that, unfortunately, in the circumstances can be stopped in no other way.

Third, and we'll have to talk about this at length in the next chapter, it's true that the young Harry and his friends all tell lies—fairly frequently and apparently with ease. We also are informed that the adolescent Harry on occasion swears. We aren't told what he says, but only that he can speak in this way when frustrated. Rowling doesn't present lying or swearing as a good thing, or as in any way admirable or commendable behavior. She just represents it as actually going on in the lives of these young people. In particular, she doesn't portray the students' casualness about truth as right, only as rife. Again, this does not intimate any form of moral relativism; it's just a display of moral realism. By all current ethical surveys in the real world, this is, sadly, how lots of young people act. Over 90 percent of children under the age of eighteen who were questioned in a recent ethics survey admitted that they lie to their parents. They tell lies to others, too. In another survey, almost 100 percent of adults admitted that they lie, dissimulate, prevaricate, or stretch the truth beyond its proper bounds on occasion. This is how we are. It's nothing to be proud of, and it's certainly nothing to endorse, but it's part of the human condition.

The only people who claim never to have engaged in such behavior tend to be either individuals with very bad memories or else people who are doing the very thing they deny in the act of denying it.

We'll return to this topic as our main focus in the next chapter, because it is so important in our personal and business lives. We live in a culture where it's become more common, more expected, and, unfortunately, more accepted to engage in unethical forms of deception. Some people in the world of business see this as a normal part of negotiating and as a standard tool in their tactical arsenal. Others, unfortunately, also view it as an inevitable element of marketing. And yet we are almost all still morally offended when we discover that we've personally been told lies and deceived. Most of us understand, deep down, that lies always detract from the best sort of life and prevent the building of the best and most healthy relationships.

Surveys have shown repeatedly that lying is remarkably pervasive in high schools and colleges throughout the nation. No wonder, then, that this can be a problem when people enter the world of work. As the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote in 1918, "The child is father to the man." Princeton philosopher Harry G. Frankfurt recently wrote a surprisingly bestselling little book titled *On Bullshit*, in which he contends that, throughout the culture, we've lost our sense of the importance of truth. One man I know recently told me that he had been fired from a sales job with great responsibility. When he asked why, his boss replied, "Because of your ethics." The executive went on to explain that in this important sales position, the young man had to be willing to do whatever it took to make a sale, and that this included an openness to using even deception and outright lies whenever necessary. My friend was known to be a man committed to truth and honesty, and his moral stance was deemed to be completely unacceptable for his job. It can get that bad.

**Truth is ultimately a friend, even when it looks like a threatening stranger.**

From the point of view of what I know, believe, and value now, it's a source of great embarrassment for me to look back on my life so far and to have to acknowledge, even to myself, that I've actually told some lies—not as a matter of course, or at all frequently, and mostly in my youth, I'll hasten to add, but on at least some fairly rare occasions. Over a period of years in the past, to my current regret, I at times resorted to delicate and diplomatic untruth, usually to protect the feelings of another person, but on a few and especially shameful occasions, merely to safeguard myself from embarrassment or trouble. I never let this creep into my classroom work as a student, into my own professional endeavors as a teacher, or into any of my business relationships, but I allowed it just enough incursion into my life to understand from firsthand experience how the young Harry Potter could fall into this easy "out" on many occasions. Owing to the same

range of experience, I also now know without any doubt that, in the final analysis, it's not a good thing to do. I didn't always skip the odd social occasion or miss the occasionally inconvenient commitment because I really wasn't feeling well, but I later actually felt pretty bad about claiming it at the time. Not even my best psychosomatic skills could cause my physiology to match my excuses every time. Now, years later, I believe that, in my maturity, I have learned my proper lessons about all this, and I wish I had understood it at a much younger age. It's been a long time since I've offered another person even the smallest little white lie to avoid offending, or used any sort of artful dodge to slip the noose of trouble I felt I didn't need. And the surprising discovery I've made is that it was never necessary at all. In addition, for all the time since then, I've enjoyed tremendously the difference of how it feels to live more thoroughly in the truth and have come to understand what good can be done and what can be built in the world, only by consistently using the reliable, unshakable foundation of fact.

Most of us normally experience good and evil in fairly subtle and less than dramatic ways throughout our day-to-day experience. All good is important, and all evil is damaging, but most of what we encounter in our normal lives in developed societies tends to be fairly far from either extreme end of the spectrum. We confront horrible evil and we see the most exalted forms of good more often in art and history than in the ordinary course of daily life. But certainly, a clear distinction between good and evil is never just something for books, movies, and crime dramas on television, perhaps in addition to what we read in the news about events in faraway places. It matters deeply in the reality of our normal daily lives. It also matters a great deal in the world of Harry Potter.

Let's think for one more moment about the charge that in the Harry Potter stories evil isn't portrayed in an absolute way. I wouldn't want to come across a figure more evil than the vile Lord Voldemort. This is a completely corrupt wizard questing for the ultimate power, an ascendancy over life and death. And he seems to enjoy killing any-

one who stands in his way. He takes over lives, perverts the souls of others, and has no regard whatsoever for any positive value. The fact that he may have begun life as an apparently normal little boy, and then increasingly become so evil over the course of the years, doesn't make him any less wicked, as if he is somehow a junior upstart compared to a possible figure of eternal evil. Even the Satan of the Bible once fell from grace. A person can embody evil, and perhaps even something like absolute evil, despite the fact that it has taken him some time to get into that condition.

There are absolutes of good and evil in the Harry Potter stories just as there are in real life, but most of the characters there, just like the people here, move around day to day along the moral spectrum moderately far from either extreme. Rarely do we encounter pure good or unalloyed evil, but, more commonly, some mix of each. Most of the main characters in the magic world of Harry Potter are young people moving through a fog of insight and illusion, groping their way forward to increased moral clarity, like most of us in the real world. We shouldn't just condemn them for their foibles, but applaud the compelling depiction of their journey from a considerable degree of naive carelessness with good and evil into a greater wisdom that clearly sees the difference. It's ultimately this that Rowling gives us. And in doing so, she helps us to appreciate the real nature of ethics in the world.

#### ETHICAL AND UNETHICAL PEOPLE

A genuinely ethical person believes that some personal qualities are objectively good—trustworthiness, for instance—and others are objectively bad—untrustworthiness would be an equally good example. He or she also believes that some actions are objectively right—helping a good person who is in need, for example—and others are objectively wrong—intentionally harming an innocent person for no good reason would be an uncontroversial case. The ethical person holds a conviction that the good and the right are to be embraced, and the bad and the wrong are to be avoided. From the perspective of ethics, anyone who

fairly consistently embodies the good and the right, with no radical departures from that pattern, is deemed morally good. A person who embodies predominantly the bad and the wrong is for that parallel reason morally bad. In addition, any extreme and apparently irredeemable version of the morally bad or morally wrong is most often characterized by an ethical person as evil. The completely unethical or amoral person, by contrast, most often has a very different view of life. From his perspective, good and evil don't even exist as objective features of existence.

At one point, Harry discovers in a surprising way that one of his recently hired instructors at Hogwarts is secretly a servant of the evil wizard Voldemort. As their confrontation is happening and the truth is coming out, Professor Quirrell suddenly speaks of himself in the past, in his own youth, perhaps even hoping to influence Harry and win him over to the dark side, by saying:

A foolish young man I was then, full of ridiculous ideas about good and evil. Lord Voldemort showed me how wrong I was. There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it. (SS 291)

The unethical person thinks that life is one big game. Power is its goal, as well as the main implement for playing it. This philosophy of life can be found represented in human history from the earliest times, but it has perhaps its most famous embodiment in some of the work of the Renaissance philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli. It seems that Machiavelli believed the meaning of life to be just power—getting it, exercising it, and maintaining it. Everything else is secondary. You want money? Get enough power and you will be able to acquire it. Do you crave fame? Again, sufficient power can make it happen. Comfort? Security? Reputation? Powerless people can only dream. Whatever you want, the right amount of power can put it within your reach. Therefore, you should seek power, Machiavelli and all like-minded philosophers have urged. In more recent times, the nineteenth-century German thinker Friedrich Nietzsche developed a

similar take on life, and his works influenced various Nazi theorists in later years.

**It's ironic that the alternative to an ethical life is the unbridled pursuit of power — since the deepest source of genuine power is living the ethical life.**

This is the life philosophy of the wizard referred to by people who fear him as "You-Know-Who" or "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named," the evil Lord Voldemort, Harry's archenemy and nemesis. Voldemort seeks power over other people, power over all of life, and ultimately power over death. He says to his followers:

"You know my goal—to conquer death." (GF 653)

Professor Quirrell's downfall was to follow in Voldemort's footsteps and serve to do his bidding in all things, hoping in that way to obtain a share in his power.

Recall the famous claim of Lord Acton in 1887: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The lust for power is an inherently corrupting quest. The more of it that an unethical person gets, the more he wants, and the further he drifts from a proper perspective on life. There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with power. Power can be used for good or evil. Great power can put a person in a position to do great good. What is wrong, and is inevitably corrupting, is a focal quest after power for its own sake—which is to say, ultimately, for one's own sake. This is a life path that is inherently self-absorbed and that falls into the category that traditional monotheistic religions label as "idolatry." An all-consuming pursuit of power easily becomes a worship of power and plunges a person into a state of corruption that cuts him off from all the higher values in life. Like traditional forms of idolatry, this pursuit ends up being self-defeating and self-destructive.

When Harry first visits the Gringotts Bank, where the wizards

of his world keep their gold, money, and other valuables, he sees engraved on some inner entrance doors a short poem about greed that is meant to serve as a warning to all prospective thieves. It actually conveys a broader cautionary word than that, and applies to any form of greed for other people's money, for power, or for any other form of desired status or personal resources. It says, in part:

Enter, stranger, but take heed  
Of what awaits the sin of greed,  
For those who take, but do not earn,  
Must pay most dearly in their turn. (SS 72-73)

Seeking and taking anything that isn't properly ours will bring with it the unpleasant surprise of some form of proper punishment. The unethical person doesn't typically understand this, and so is often baffled at the true consequences of his greed for power or things. The danger in chasing the wrong things, or in pursuing any goals in the wrong ways, is that we'll find to our surprise that the totality of what we get will end up being very different from what we had wanted and hoped to attain.

### THE DANGERS OF CORRUPTION

There is another dangerous process evident in these stories. Nearly all of the people who associate with Voldemort are thoroughly corrupted by his company as they become ensnared by his vision. This is a danger noted by all the great philosophers, and one that results from a tendency in human psychology that we've already considered in our look at Harry's courage. There is an incredible malleability to human personality. We tend to become like the people we're around. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul quotes a Greek proverb that goes back at least as far as the work of the ancient poet Menander (c. 342-292 B.C.) when he says in his first letter to the Corinthian church, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'" George Herbert

much later said it like this: "Associate not with evil men, lest you increase their number." No greater advice has ever been given. Let's call this "The Principle of Association"—we are influenced by and in many ways eventually become like the people we're around.

I watched a small lizard outside my back door yesterday. When he was sitting on a bright green plant, he was every bit as green as the stem supporting his weight. Then he jumped off onto the brown and rusty braided wire handle of an old wicker basket. Within a surprisingly short time, he was nearly as brown as the wire. We human beings don't change our color, but our personalities and actual characters can mold themselves to our environment in unexpected ways. This is why it's so important to choose our friends and close associates wisely. Their impact on us can be dramatic, and if it's bad, insidiously so, because we're typically unaware of what's happening as we begin to be transformed by the example of their presence.

The number of widespread ethical failures to hit the business headlines in the past several years has been astounding. And in each case, corrupt individuals have had an insidious influence on their associates, corrupting them in turn, and often convincing them to do things they might not otherwise have even thought of doing. We may feel like we're strong enough to be around any kind of person without being influenced by them, but that's usually not a very realistic opinion. Bad people can have terrible effects on us in many ways, even if we're never actually tempted to follow them into their misdeeds.

---

### We become like the people we surround ourselves with.

---

Rowling illustrates something closely akin to this principle in a particularly vivid way. The dementors are horrible and frightening creatures used as guards at the toughest prison for criminally convicted wizards, a place called Azkaban. Their role in the punishment of wrongdoers ends up, however, going far beyond that of providing security. Just being around them amounts to a terrible punishment itself. The good and helpful Professor Lupin explains to Harry that

# 6

## THE WISDOM OF THE WIZARDS

Nothing is mightier than wisdom.

—*Socrates*

The Harry Potter books are full of wisdom about life. Some of this insight for living is explicitly articulated by one character or another. Some is just shown in the exciting action and developing story line. The most important pieces of advice explicitly stated in the books often come from the mouth of Headmaster Dumbledore. For example, we see him saying, in various places, such things about life as:

“It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live . . .” (SS 214)

This great leader is both a thinker and a man of action. He lives life to the fullest, and in the best possible way, and wants his students to enjoy the same approach to their time on earth. Dreaming is great, but doing is greater.

Dumbledore also articulates what may be one of the most important pieces of wisdom in the whole series of stories when he says:

“It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.” (CS 333)

Dumbledore is an existentialist of the most important sort. No preexisting categories need determine our identity or decide our fate. We have the chance, through choice, to carve out our own identities and create our own futures. The ancient philosopher Heraclitus once said, "Character is destiny." Since anyone's character is ultimately a result of the choices that he or she makes, it's an even deeper realization to see that "choice is destiny." In the recent movie *Batman Begins*, one of Bruce Wayne's oldest friends says to him, "It's not who you are underneath, it's what you do that defines you." Dumbledore takes this insight back to the source, to that factor over which we always have some control, the element of choice.

---

**It is our choices that create our future and determine our legacy.**

---

Dumbledore also says wise things about death as well as about life. At one point he makes an enigmatic and fascinating observation reflecting the wisdom of Socrates when he remarks that, to the well-organized mind, death is just "the next great adventure" (SS 297). It's an insight of the most profound thinkers that life is a series of adventures. Dumbledore joins some of the very greatest philosophers by extending that exciting concept beyond the grave and seeing death itself as in this way an extension of life. And with that in mind, he explains at a much later time that when people fear death and darkness, what they really are afraid of is nothing more than just the unknown (HB 566). The headmaster understands that wisdom about life must encompass wisdom about death, and he does not hesitate to pass on what he has learned to his students, who will inevitably face this one adventure at the end of all the others they will ever confront. Many other wise perspectives of equal importance are never explicitly stated but can be gleaned from the behaviors of various characters and the consequences of their conduct. Rowling doesn't try at all to be professorial, pedantic, or preachy in her approach to sharing wisdom. But she clearly considers the wisdom to be learned from the world of the wizards to be an important element in the overall sweep of the

events that she portrays. In this chapter, I want to survey briefly some of this wisdom about living that we can derive from the stories. There is no particular order to the insights and perspectives I'll offer here for comment and consideration. But they all add up and fit together to begin to outline a powerful, and powerfully good, worldview. Rowling's intellect and perceptiveness—her philosophical sensibilities and visions—shine through all her stories in both simple and subtle ways. I believe that she understands quite well that we can lead our lives, and lead other people, in the best possible ways only when we root everything we do in the deepest life wisdom we can find.

First, I should make it perfectly clear what wisdom is and what it isn't. It isn't esoteric knowledge or deeply hidden truth about life that is extremely difficult to discover, grasp, and master. That's a false model of wisdom propounded by the gnostics and sophisticated hucksters in almost every world culture. It's also a model that has gained unfortunate ascendancy in our own time. Real wisdom isn't some sort of highly secret key to life that is well hidden from ordinary people. The truth is simple and powerful. Wisdom is just great insight for living. And it's often conveyed by simple statements that serve to remind us of what we've already learned as we've walked this path of life from our earliest years to the present day.

Oddly enough, we often forget the insights we've already had about living as we continue in our adventures, and we typically do so precisely at the times that we need those insights the most. Of course, our forgetting is never complete. When reminded of something that we long ago realized, we usually recognize the truth of the insight immediately. It was still buried in memory, locked safely away deep in our neurons, ready for retrieval. But somehow we had forgotten that we knew it. It was no longer "top of mind." It had lost its proper grip on us. We had neglected to use it to filter our further experiences or to help us govern our emotions and chart out our actions in the subsequent relevant situations we've faced. And so we need to be reminded of what we really know.

The great wisdom literature of the world often serves to help us

recapture insights that we've already had. And it helps us to clarify those thoughts. But it sometimes gives a great many of us new insights as well, things that we had never thought of, and novel perspectives that we can test in our further experience. Even these new insights often ring true instantly as we understand them in the light of our previous experience. They capture patterns that we might at some level have noticed but never thought much about. We may not have made the connections they explicitly give us, but we can see them when they're shown to us. These nuggets of new wisdom often open for us some new doors into the future based on what's been learned in the past. And in many ways they can guide our path as we move forward into each new day.

Human beings have always enjoyed capturing their most common insights about living in pithy statements that allow for ease of memory and readiness of use. But wisdom is not always to be found in the form of well-known truths. It's occasionally captured in a statement that may be surprising to many people, such as Dumbledore's comment about death's being the next great adventure. But even surprising wisdom shouldn't be thought of as involving technical or difficult lessons available only to the greatest gurus and their most devoted long-term students. Wisdom about life can be distilled from the process of living by anyone who pays enough attention.

In our previous chapters, we've looked at how Dumbledore embodies wisdom and virtue, how Harry experiences one of the classic virtues, what the wizards in general show us about the distinction between ethical and unethical living, how important issues of truth and deception can come to a new measure of clarification through these stories, and what Dumbledore and Harry can teach us about transformative leadership. In this chapter, we'll survey some of the main nuggets of wisdom to be found throughout the Harry Potter books, bits of insight and perspective that can help us all to live better and more meaningful lives. And then, in the next chapter, we'll confront the most fundamental issue of meaning more directly.

Meaning and wisdom are both crucial to the living of a good life.

We all seem to know this at some level. But what is not as widely understood is that meaning and wisdom are as important in organizational contexts, and in all sorts of business endeavors, as they are in our personal lives. When we look closely at the lives of very successful and admirable people, we often see that the greatest achievers have plugged into some fairly deep wisdom about life and human nature. They know themselves and the people around them in a penetrating way. They have a sense of what really matters and what isn't so important. And that's what allows them to concentrate their time and energy in the best possible ways. Wisdom empowers. Meaning directs. As we move deeper into a new era, it will be increasingly important in corporate and executive life to understand and embody the insights of our greatest philosophers and the wisdom of the greatest wizards of excellence who live among us. The life wisdom that runs through the Harry Potter stories, and the deeper understandings that crop up at various places in these remarkable narratives, can be expressed in terms of some very simple, clear insights. Let's look at a few.

## LOGIC AND LUCK

*The Wisdom Insight: Logic and luck are both important for solving life's problems.*

Some people think that life is all just a matter of luck—good, bad, and indifferent. Certain individuals seem to have more good luck, and others appear to have more of the bad sort. At some times in our lives, the good luck is rolling, and at other times the bad luck just won't stop. But most believers in the concept of luck think there is nothing we can do about it and we just have to accept this sad fact. We live our lives, come what may. The universe, in this view, is like a big casino of random rewards and punishments that happen to cluster at some times in little bursts—momentary or extended—of good or bad fortune. Nobody really gets what they deserve, but rather whatever the roll of the cosmic dice happens to bring them at any given time.

More insightful philosophers have surmised that only about fifty

percent of life is luck. The rest is to some extent within our control. Other profound thinkers suspect that everything we tend to categorize as luck is really the nonrandom result of complex causes outside our purview, and some suggest that this may include the outworking of an inscrutable divine providence. If we broaden the concept of luck to include everything that happens to us that's outside our control, whatever its true cause might be, and we entertain some notion of human freedom existing alongside that realm, we can easily find ourselves persuaded that life is, at most, only partially dependent on luck. We clearly have no control over many of the things that happen to us. And much that comes our way doesn't seem particularly deserved. But we can carve out some limited territory in the world where we appear to be at least mostly responsible for what happens, however ridiculously small that territory may sometimes seem. And this means simply that when we're thinking more deeply about life, we tend to realize at some level that it can't just be all luck. As Hermione says to Harry during their sixth year at school:

"Luck can only get you so far, Harry." (HB 517)

There is an old saying that luck is where preparation meets opportunity, so even if we believe that a lot of things in life just come down to luck, we should work hard to prepare ourselves in every way we can to take advantage of the opportunities that inevitably at some point will come our way. That's how we can maximize the benefits of good luck and minimize the damage of bad luck. When we take care at least to try to prepare for whatever we might face in life, we put ourselves into the best position to be able to deal with whatever crosses our paths, whether it gladdens our hearts or whacks us in the head. When things go terribly wrong, lots of people talk about their bad luck and in that way seek to avoid any sense of responsibility for whatever has happened. When things go extremely well, however, fewer seem inclined to talk about their good luck, unless they have publicists or coaches instructing them to do so. Many people seem to

prefer to ascribe extraordinarily good fortune to their own talents and hard work. But Harry Potter is not one of these people. He is prepared to admit it when he sees luck as playing a big part in his accomplishments. One of the great passages on this is in book five, *The Order of the Phoenix*. Ron and Hermione are trying to convince Harry to give his fellow students some practical lessons in Defense Against the Dark Arts. Harry is protesting that he shouldn't be anyone's teacher. Ron then begins to recall all the great things that Harry has done, year after year, to defeat evil whenever he has been attacked. Harry tries to deflect the praise, saying he was lucky on one occasion, helped on another, and on a third, it was really a magical device that gave him the time he needed to achieve what he was able to do. Ron and Hermione are enjoying his protests immensely and find it quite funny that he has no real sense of how good he is in combat with evil. Finally, Harry has just had it with Ron's confident-sounding recitation of his accomplishments and reacts like this:

"Just listen to me . . . all that stuff was luck—I didn't know what I was doing half the time . . . I just did whatever I could think of, and I nearly always had help . . ." (OP 327)

Harry has a moment of real humility here, saying that he's just a lucky boy who's benefited from the assistance of others whenever he's needed it. But then, that's true for all of us who have ever lived through any real difficulties and come out the other side. We've had some help. And we feel lucky to have made it through safe and sound. But Harry really knows deep down that it's not just luck. There is something more. He goes on in his response to Ron and Hermione and remembers aloud what it actually felt like, in the intensity of the moment, to face the evil Voldemort. He says:

"The whole time you're sure you know there's nothing between you and dying except your own—your own brain or guts or whatever . . ." (OP 328)

I love the word choice that Harry uses here to depict what he felt he had to rely on in the situations of tremendous danger he's faced. Brain and guts—intellect and courage—are the two ingredients he identifies for dealing with the most challenging situations it's possible to encounter. We've already discussed Harry's courage in Chapter 2. His intellect is just as important.

Standardized intelligence tests and formal school exams check for our abilities to memorize and analyze when confronted with ink on paper or words and drawings on a computer screen, but they can never register our overall ability to think on our feet in a tense or stressful situation outside the artificial setting of an exam room. But there are many forms of intelligence that can be tested only in real-life situations, and then only over a longer stretch of time. The ability to think through a situation from where we are to where we want to be and then take the right actions to get there, adjusting and adapting as we go, is known by philosophers as "practical reason." It's a form of intelligence and a life skill important to have. And it's one that Harry enjoys in generous measure.

Harry's friend Hermione Granger is, of course, the poster girl for intelligence and logical reason in all its manifestations. When any problem arises, she wants to get busy with research right away, to position herself to know whatever is already understood about the many elements of the challenge she faces. If Hermione is ever in doubt about anything, she hits the library. You can easily imagine her on a computer and Googling in all her free time. But in the world of Hogwarts, she is immersed in books. And the information she picks up is almost always helpful. Rowling shows us through the character of Hermione the practical impact of knowledge—the vital importance of research and study outside the classroom as well as within its walls. At the end of her first year at Hogwarts, headmaster Dumbledore gives Hermione a special student award for her ability to use logic to find a path forward and then reason her way along it in even the most difficult and dangerous of situations (SS 305). She is no useless bookworm with a brain full of theoretical facts that are of no practical

value. She is a young woman who can think clearly under great duress, when many people would panic and mentally shut down. I love it that Dumbledore characterizes Hermione as being able to engage in what he calls "the use of cool logic in the face of fire." That's a great expression. Logic can cool down many superheated situations and create some degree of inner calm amid even apparent catastrophe and terrible panic. It can carve out room for courage to operate. It can serve us like a searchlight in a dark cavern and show us the way out. The ability to think through a situation from all relevant angles and take the right path forward can make all the difference between victory and disaster.

Not long before the awards banquet of the first year, Harry and Hermione are in pursuit of a very powerful object and are trying to get through a series of dangerous obstacles in order to locate it. They suddenly find themselves in an underground chamber surrounded by flames, and their only option for escape is provided by a complex-looking riddle written on a piece of paper. They both read it. Hermione looks relieved. She says:

"This isn't magic—it's logic—a puzzle. A lot of the greatest wizards haven't got an ounce of logic, they'd be stuck in here forever."  
(SS 285)

With that one statement, the most intellectually engaged young wizard around signals the importance of logic and reasoning. The mind can do things that no magic can match. And this is a point that Rowling wants us to appreciate. Because of Hermione's ability to think and reason, literally as well as metaphorically, "in the face of fire," she is able to solve difficult riddles throughout her life and, as a result, deal successfully with the many challenges she encounters.

---

### An effective leader encourages critical thought.

---

In the famous Triwizard Tournament during his fourth year at Hogwarts, the last of the obstacles Harry has to face involves a riddle

(GF 628-629). Again, the ability to reason well is crucial for success in the situation. And this time the logical Hermione is not around to save the day. But Harry is able to focus, think clearly, and move forward. He uses logic to do something that no magic alone could accomplish. And so, once again, we see the more-than-magical effectiveness of the human mind at work in even the most challenging of situations. We need to clarify something important about the concept of logic in its most comprehensive understanding. Logic isn't just formal reasoning that employs classical rules for the sake of discovering truth and pleasing fastidious college professors. It's possible to use the term in a broader sense that is sometimes employed by philosophers and other careful analysts of the human condition. In this sense, we could say that there is "a logic of the brain" and "a logic of the gut"—to take up Harry's distinctive way of talking. But I suspect that Harry's mention of "guts" in the passage quoted earlier is just his way of referring to some deep part of the inner self distinct from and beneath the level of conscious reasoning that many philosophers have alluded to differently, and more traditionally, as "the heart." With this different anatomical metaphor, the phrase "the logic of the heart" has long stood for the direct, dynamic, and structured formulation of belief, attitude, and especially action at the core of human personality. But to drill down a bit more in the current context, it's interesting to note that the most important virtue traditionally associated with the metaphor of the heart is courage. With that in mind, we can say more specifically that in addition to a logic of the intellect there is a logic of courage in human life. The logic of courage involves the five steps to courageous conduct revealed by Harry and covered in our chapter on his bravery. There is a logic, or dynamic, rationally structured shape, to courageous living. And it is the pattern displayed by those five steps. The logic of the mind or intellect is the ability to use both perceptual knowledge and intuition, filtered through memory and linked with the testimony of others, to draw reasonable conclusions about what might otherwise be unknown. This is a skill that is crucial for success in life and absolutely necessary for dealing well with any difficulties along the way. It is an ability displayed by all the characters in the Harry Potter stories

whenever they succeed. And it's much more important in life than luck.

In fact, many wise and subtle thinkers would suggest that the vast realm of what we colloquially call "luck" is a blended domain consisting of perhaps some real randomness, along with patterns and plans too complex and hidden to be discerned by the casual glance. There are forces in the world, both for good and for ill, that impinge on our lives in ways that we do not and cannot always recognize. We might never be able to tame these forces fully, but we can enhance the good and resist the ill most effectively when we use the logic of our minds and our hearts to pursue worthy goals and support proper values in every situation.

Both luck and logic are involved in the living of a good life. We position ourselves to make the most of our luck when we use logic the best we can in all of its forms. As Harry Potter ultimately realizes, when problems need to be solved and people need to be saved, both logic and luck can play a proper role in the unfolding of events. Each helps the other along. But the end of the stick that we have in our hands is logic. Therefore we should cultivate it, master it, and through working smart as well as courageously hard, we should take care to use the best of logic in every situation we confront.

There is an old saying that has some currency among the highly educated, a sort of commentary on life in this world first coined by A. E. Housman in his well-named poem "Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff," a simple rhyme that playfully alludes to the relative strengths of brains and beer when it comes to understanding life: "Malt does more than Milton can, to justify God's ways to man." This is funny, to some extent true, and, in addition, quite memorable. To play on it just a bit, we can make our distinctive point very simply: Wise work does more than worry can to reconcile luck to man. It takes rationally planned and determined work to make the best use of the good luck that comes our way and to overcome the bad luck that sometimes crosses our path. The logic of good work is the coming together of intellect and courage through practical reason. This is a lesson of the wisest wizards that every leader should embrace and live.